

**To seek asylum is legal,
to ignore them feels criminal.**



The Bridge for Asylum Seekers (Bridge) Committee would like to thank our donors: individuals, philanthropic organisations and the NSW ClubGRANTS program* alike. Your generous support has (again) enabled Bridge to assist so many otherwise destitute asylum seekers and their families during the year.

Enormous thanks go to Rod Sharples of Datadiction for his ongoing, pro bono development and maintenance of the donor database that underpins Bridge's operations. Rod's skills assist us in analysing donation trends, automatically receipting donations and managing monthly financial reports.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Craig Stokoe of LPN who continues, again pro bono, to support Bridge with content and design for a range of communications.

And we extend thanks to Stephen Webb, You Need a Writer, for managing our Facebook page.

Bridge is again grateful for the umbrella provided by Uniting NSW.ACT and to Balmain Uniting Church which provided our meeting space.

This year's challenges

It has been a demanding year for Bridge—as it has been for other not-for-profits and for individuals in the Australian community. NSW droughts and bushfires saw significant donor-focus (understandably) shift to the Rural Fire Service and survivors of the fires.

For many others, COVID-19 has decimated incomes—drastically for some, with asylum seekers among them. All of which saw Bridge with insufficient funds to pay clients during May and June of 2020. Fortunately, you, our grantmakers and donors have been extremely responsive to their plight.

We have changed our status, but not our focus

Since forming in 2003, Bridge has operated under the auspices of Uniting NSW.ACT, the community services arm of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church. We have greatly valued Uniting's support for those 17 years, empowering us with registered charity, deductible gift recipient and charity tax concession statuses and making fundraising appeals possible.

However, towards the end of 2019-20 Uniting advised that their support would be retracted so as to have more direct control of all operations. This forced us to consider either closing down or becoming an independent entity. The Committee chose the latter and, with legal support from Gilbert + Tobin, has initiated steps to independence. Our journey will continue in the 2020-21 financial year.

We are indebted to our lawyers Gilbert + Tobin (particularly Nicole Lojszczyk and Michelle Hannon) for their guidance as we transform into an independent organisation. Their advice is invaluable.

17 years on,
Bridge has
helped

2320

people,
including

480

children

Bridge clients need support for an average of 162 days—up from 64 just two years ago

Bridge's Key Achievements 2019–20

Raising a total grant /donation income of \$320,518.07.

This comprised:

\$149,129.07 in regular and ad hoc donations from individual donors [\$116,095.40 in 2018-19]. This year's increase contributed significantly to the support we afforded, including to those affected by COVID-19 shut-downs. Regular donations, of course, allow the Bridge committee to forecast its support expenditure and give asylum seekers continuity of funding.

\$171,389.00 in grant income [\$229,054.94 in 2018-19].

Critical to our survival, this included:

- \$166,389.00 from philanthropic organisations [\$164,254.94 in 2018-19]
- \$5,000.00 through the NSW ClubGRANTS* program [\$42,300.00 in 2018-19].

Submitting 14 grant applications (with just five successes being well down on previous years) and seven acquittals.

* The ClubGRANTS scheme is a shared State Government-Club Industry program, funded by a 2.25% gaming machine tax rebate provided by the State Government to registered clubs with gaming machine profits in excess of \$1 million per annum.

Concerning shifts

Grantmaking trends impact negatively

A number of grants Bridge had previously secured are now on a 'by invitation only' basis. To date, no invitations have been received—even from those previously funding us.

Grant-recipient incorporation has become essential for a few grantmakers. As Uniting was not incorporated we were unable to apply for these grants. This disadvantage will be resolved in the next financial year as Bridge commences operation as an incorporated association.

Feedback from other grant seekers in the community sector confirms that competition for funds is worsening and more so with donations going towards drought/bushfire and COVID-19 relief.

And, of course, COVID-19 has directly impacted some grant makers forced into business closures and unable to offer grants.

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Burundi, China, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe



Having asylum does not mean having a home

Numbers assisted by Bridge funding

In the course of the year we assisted 167 clients, of whom 34 were children. The total provided to clients for the 2019-20 financial year was \$274,528—compared with \$402,385 in the previous financial year.

How long do clients remain on Bridge support?

The average duration of Bridge support for a client has increased in 2019-20 from 143 (2018-19) to 162 days. This is in even sharper contrast with the 2017-18 figure of 64 days duration and a glaring demonstration of the adverse policy changes implemented by the Department of Home Affairs over this time.

Reflecting, in part, the early impact of COVID-19 on those seeking asylum, it also places in stark view the challenge Bridge faces in trying to meet the needs of all asylum seekers.

Origin of asylum seekers assisted in 2019-20

Bridge clients came from 32 countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Burundi, China, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Where do our clients reside?

In 2019-20 our clients lived in 20 local government areas in NSW: Bayside, Blacktown, Burwood, Canterbury-Bankstown, City of Canada Bay, City of Liverpool, City of Parramatta, City of Sydney, Cumberland, Fairfield, Georges River, Hornsby Shire, Inner West, Liverpool, Macarthur, North Sydney, Penrith, Ryde and The Hills Shire.

Those living in wealthier areas are housed by members of the Australian community or in accommodation provided by asylum seeker agencies. Many are technically homeless: couch surfing or sleeping on a mattress on someone's floor and making a contribution to the rent.

Distribution of Bridge Funds

Prior to receiving Bridge support, all clients were assessed as meeting our criteria for financial need and likelihood of asylum application success.

In the first half of 2019-20, Bridge continued to limit funding for clients to six months duration to focus on those new to Australia with no supports in the community. However, COVID-19 impacts upon both employment and employment prospects rendered this approach inappropriate as new arrivals were halted by border closures. Previously self-sufficient asylum seekers suddenly lost jobs and, with no federal government assistance, we needed to keep them from becoming impoverished and homeless.

Bridge continues close collaboration with the Asylum Seekers Centre (ASC) who provide frontline services for NSW asylum seekers.

Thank you again for your support, in all of its forms. Without it, we would have been unable to provide the remarkable level of financial support given to otherwise destitute asylum seekers.

Janet Castle
Chair
Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation

Many grants are now 'by invitation only' — we have received none



The Bridge Management Committee in 2019-20 comprised: Janet Castle (community refugee advocate/Chair/grant application writer), Andrew Clark (Treasurer), Felicia Tesoriero (Secretary), Janice Thompson (community advocate/grant application writer), and Caroline Mackie (community advocate).

With the exception of the work undertaken writing grant applications, all members of the Bridge Committee worked in a voluntary capacity. The funds paid for grant application writing were immediately donated back to Bridge.

Income and Expenditure Details

1 July 2019- 30 June 2020

Income	
Donations	\$149,129.07
Grants	\$171,389.00
Interest	\$52.99
Total Income	\$320,571.06
Expenditure	
Administrative expenses	\$85.25
Bank fees	\$644.40
Client support	\$274,527.50
Grant application writing	\$7,500.00
Total Expenses	\$282,757.15
Surplus	\$37,813.91

On behalf of our clients, Bridge thanks these donors for making our work possible:


**The Scully
Fund**

**Centenary Foundation
William Warden**



Bridge Income 2019-20	
Grant Income Total	\$171,389.00
Including from:	
Philanthropic Organisations	\$166,389.00
The Scully Fund	\$150,000.00
Besen Family Foundation	\$5,000.00
Owen and Shirley Siegel Foundation	\$1,500.00
Centenary Foundation (William Warden)	\$9,889.00
NSW ClubGRANTS Program	\$5,000.00
Hornsby RSL	\$5,000.00
Regular & Adhoc Income from Individual Donors	\$149,129.07
In P & L	
Grant Income	\$171,389.00
Donations Received	\$149,129.07
Others: Interest	\$52.99
	\$52.99
	\$320,571.06

Prepared by Andrew Clark, Bridge Treasurer



Our clients easily meet
criteria for our support.

Sadly.

They must:

- have grounds for seeking asylum and reside in NSW
- have lodged or are readying an application for asylum
- have the support of a reputable lawyer or migration agent
- be, or are about to become, destitute